Australian Bureau of Statistics

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More than three in four Australians in the labour force last year

More than three-quarters (78% or 10.8 million) Australians aged 15 to 69 years either worked or looked for work at some time during the year ending February 2003, according to figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) today.

Today's figures show that 85% of males and 72% of females participated in the labour force (i.e. either worked or looked for work) at some time in the 12 months to February 2003. For males, this proportion has remained stable for a number of years, while for females it has steadily increased from 67% in 1993.

Participation in the labour force was highest for people aged 20 to 24 years (90%), and lowest for people aged 55 to 69 years (48%).

A total of 10.2 million people worked at some time during the year (74% of all people), and two-thirds (6.8 million) spent the whole year working.

Other findings include:

- The proportion of males who worked at some time during the year has remained relatively stable since 1993 (81% in 2003). The proportion of females who worked at some time has steadily risen throughout that period from 60% in 1993 to 68% in 2003;
- There were 1.7 million people who looked for work at some time during the year ending February 2003, of whom 55% were male;
- The proportion of males who looked for work at some time during the year has steadily decreased, from 20% in 1993 to 14% in 2003. Similarly, the proportion of females has decreased from 14% to 11% over the same period;
- Over half of all people who looked for work at some time during the year had looked for between 1 and 12 weeks (53%), and a further 11% had looked for work for the whole of the year;
- Two-thirds (67%) of people who looked for work during the year had also worked during the year; and
- There were 6.1 million people who were not in the labour force (i.e. neither worked or looked for work) at some time during the year. The most commonly reported main activities while not in the labour force for males were 'holiday, travel, or leisure activities' (26%), 'attended an educational institution' (25%), and 'retired or voluntarily inactive' (20%). For females the most commonly reported main activities were 'home duties or childcare' (47%) and 'attended an educational institution' (17%).

Further information can be found in **Labour Force Experience, Australia, February 2003** (cat. no. 6206.0).

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